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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001344

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016

TAGS: [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: IRANIAN OBSERVATIONS ON MEDIA

Classified By: DCM NANCY MCELDFOWNEY FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

[11.](#) (C) Summary: A recent survey of Iranian visa applicants suggests that most are distrustful of news from official Iranian sources and prefer to get their news from western media. Applicants relied heavily on satellite television and the internet to keep informed on world events. At least in Tehran, residents appear to have access to many news sources from outside of Iran and are open to following the views of western countries on world events. End Summary

TELEVISION

[12.](#) Most Iranians receive their news from satellite television. 70 percent said that they had access to satellite television. The most popular news programs were BBC and CNN. Voice of America, IRNA, and Fox News were also mentioned. When asked if they watch Iranian news programs, most either answered that the government-sponsored news was 'all lies' and nobody believed its content, or that they watched the local news solely to keep informed about local issues. Only four said that they solely watch news from the government and their average age was 55. When asked how difficult it was to own a satellite receiver in Iran, the majority said it was not overly difficult to obtain one. Most also noted that they have not noticed the government becoming stricter in prohibiting sale or ownership of satellite receivers, but they did note that everyone who had a satellite dish simply hid them in their homes.

INTERNET

[13.](#) (C) The next most popular form of media was the internet. Favorite internet sites were BBC Persian and CNN, confirming BBC's claim on January 24 that it is the most popular website for news in Iran. BBC claims that BBC Persian.com receives "30 million page impressions a month - about half of which are from inside Iran." 51 percent of the respondents said that they have access to the internet in their homes and/or used the internet as their primary means for getting news, or used it to supplement news from satellite television.

[14.](#) (C) Internet service providers (ISPs) in Iran filter internet users, searches to block access to sexual content as well as to some political sites. However, respondents were generally reluctant to specify which sites were blocked. One respondent noted that the filters are indiscriminate and will block attempts to access legitimate medical information as well as sexual content. This same person said that filtering had become noticeably more severe since 5 January 2006 with access to an increasing number of sites being blocked.

[15.](#) (C) Most people with home internet access use Pars Online (www.parsonline.com) as their ISP. Pars Online is the most popular ISP in Iran and has good service, offering both dial-up and high-speed ADSL service. ADSL costs 29,000 toman per month (roughly 33USD as of 10 February 2006), while dial-up service was much cheaper. Most Iranians use pre-paid cards to access the internet.

PRINT

[16.](#) (C) Only 28 percent of the respondents said that they regularly received their news from the newspaper. Among those newspapers mentioned, Hamshari was the most popular with 12 percent of the respondents claiming they read it. Sharq and Jaam-e Jam were the only other newspapers specifically mentioned; 4 percent said they read Sharq, and 4 percent said they read Jaam-e Jam.

SURVEY

[17.](#) (C) We surveyed 80 applicants. Twenty-two percent of our respondents were under 30 years old, of which 76 percent live in Tehran. Out of this cross section, 88 percent of them get their news from satellite broadcasts and 65 percent get their news from the internet.

18. (C) Survey questions were woven into visa interviews when consular officers asked about home ownership, car ownership, and computer ownership. The questioning then turned to use of the internet for news purposes and then towards a broader discussion of the preferred news sources in Iran. Of the surveyed eighty-five applicants, two-thirds of the respondents were from Tehran and the average age of the respondents was 45. The applicants were evenly split along gender.

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